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THE SPIRIT OF NIGHT.

BY NAPOLEON SARONY.

BY CORA LINN DANIELS.

(SEE OPPOSITE SUPPLEMENT).

IT is with pride and pleasure that we present to the readers of THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER, with this number, a beautiful and ideal design by Mr. Napoleon Sarony entitled "The Spirit of Night." Intended for mural or panel decoration, either in color or black and white, the original drawing was done from the living model in crayon, and subsequently copied in India ink on "process" paper, a task so difficult, especially in so delicate a subject, that the original of what we present, a marvel of ethereal grace and beauty, the technique being almost unapproachable for freedom yet nicety of touch, has been the admiration and marvel of all who have been fortunate enough to behold it. Our especial gratification, however, lies in the palpable fact that we have been able to give a perfect copy, so far as mechanics can imitate the touch and feeling of the original.

In contradistinction to a recent design given in a contemporary, we call attention to the fineness and distinctness of every line, the softness and grace of every curve, the correct distribution of light and shade, and the almost illuminated clearness of the flesh. Mr. Sarony took the same exquisite pains in preparing his delineations of all the figures representing the sculpture of Mr. Bauer, and the same result was naturally expected—a clear and beautiful picture, doing himself and the sculptor justice. We believe all critics will admit that we have not failed.

Those who are familiar with the crayon drawings and sketches of Mr. Sarony will notice with pleased commendation the rapidity and constancy of his improvement in everything which he attempts, the fire and eagerness of his own vivacious nature entering into his work, but tempered with the intuitive limitations which natural genius throws around even the most impromptu sketch. Succeeding admirably in his innumerable studies of the nude female form, and infusing into each motive a purity of feeling and chasteness of surrounding which carry them far beyond and above a possibility of vulgarity; his ever-ready pencil seems to feel the inspiration of its master and leap into obedience to his moods, his sudden and often vehement conceptions, his fleeting and unconsidered flashes of thought, or to translate with poetic transparency, yet firmness, the ardor of his composition.

These figures, inferior perhaps in strength and depth to those made in a broader and grander style, are still so successful and charming that it would be difficult to conclude which of his productions to choose. "The Spirit of Night" is an example of his art in its softest mood. Enshrouded in a tender gloom, her dark eyes closed, and the dreamy, sensuous expression of half-conscious slumber, happy with ecstatic visions sweeping over her countenance; with the fleecy veil of her hair tossed upward, and the light drapery like a mist clinging about her form, as if in love with it, she floats across the broad disk of the summer morn, eclipsing with her graceful outlines the radiant orb, and receiving on her person the shower of silvery rays, which render her ethereally spiritual.

Such, one might fancy, are the forms which glide invisible above our earthly dwelling-place, so airy-light, across "the starry cape of heaven," that none but the poet, the prophet or the artist soul could even conceive of them; but if the entrancing glimpse be given, they must have tremblingly,

"Hung over her enamour'd, and beheld
Beauty, which, whether waking or asleep,
Shot forth peculiar graces."

In the exactly opposite style is a later crayon entitled "King Lear," which has been justly characterized as "magnificent." Although conceived and finished within an hour, it was dashed on to the paper with such spirit, nerve, power, that each stroke fell, one by one, as it were, like drops of fire, kindled from the brilliant flame of his imagination. Lear, in his raging, the wild, white hair and beard tossed by the tempest, the eye lifted with agony of mind and body to the lightning flash, and receiving in its unfathomable depths the gleam of the responsive heavens, the large, thin nose indicating the grandeur of the head in its intellectuality—a truly royal feature; the broad, high brow, furrowed with years, cares, anguish, madness, despair, make up an *ensemble* so vivid, so striking, so majestic, that one can but stand in expressive silence before this ideal portrait, believing that at any moment those royal lips may utter:

"Ay, every inch a king!"

Whoever saw Salvini in his wonderful impersonation of Shakespeare's creation must remember his "make up," which so completely hid his countenance as to be almost painful, since all expression, save that of the eye, was lost; yet none could ever forget the spirit which animated those dark orbs, which burned or flashed or melted or glowed with the changes of his emotions! In this picture is concentrated that spirit at its finest issue.

To our thinking, Sarony has struck the right chord in this bold and powerful work. The lofty plane of expression which it proves him capable of attaining should henceforth be the level of his ambition. He has already gained golden opinions from all unprejudiced critics, even although he has labored under the prejudice, the burden of an association with photography, which alone gives him an unique reputation, and which he has lifted by his genius, not only to a standard which gives him a world-wide reputation, but which he has endowed with the essence of a true beauty which emulates the graces of high art.

Exquisite and ideal as are his "Zephyr," his "Convalescence," his "After the Bath," one can but feel that too long devotion to these sylph-like forms must inevitably lead to a certain lack of originality and spontaneity of feeling, and we insensibly murmur the quotation: his art,

"—enfeebled, is refined too much,
And, like pure gold, it bends at every touch.
Our sturdy Teuton yet will art obey,
More fit for manly thought, and strengthened with alloy."

A more masculine fancy, a broader spirit, a stronger execution—of these the author of "The Spirit of Night" is fully capable; and when one recognizes the gamut of his ability, ranging from the subtle shadow of a sprite, to the large and royal personality of a "Lear," one may have brightest anticipations for the future of one so peculiarly gifted.

ARTISTS RECEIVING COMPANY.

THE gloomy and conventual recesses of the Tenth Street Studio Building, the oldest of the many studio buildings in New York, were gay with bright dresses the other afternoon; they rustled with the frou-frou of silks, and the scent of flowers and Lubin's extract quenched the smell of "turps" and oil. The artists were holding their annual reception—all but about a dozen who were too busy or too bashful to stand a four-hour inspection of themselves and their achievements. Behind a few doors that bore cards stating that the occupants of those particular rooms were unavoidably absent from town, gentlemen with their hair on end and grumbling under their breath at the noise in the corridors were frantically endeavoring to finish their pictures for the forthcoming exhibition at the academy. Messrs. Shirlaw, Dielman, Chase, Farrer, Henry, La Farge, Casilear, Silva, Wilmarth, Shattuck and Guy did not exhibit, but over a score of painters opened their studios, which had been "slicked up" for the occasion, and in smiles and broadcloth welcomed a thousand or so of visitors. Subdued cries of "Isn't it sweet?" and "How perfectly lovely!" were heard whenever a number of young women entered a studio, and the artists were flattered to the point of nausea.

T. W. Wood presided over a number of studies from Vermont life: old country squires in argument with cobblers in their doorways, small boys grinning and making pumpkin lanterns, farmer folk in sheds and barns. J. G. Brown's unnaturally clean gamins in accurately ragged raiment and his studies of dilapidated persons of the "old codger" variety, amused his visitors who were also mildly pleased with the pink and white damsels of his pupil, Ferdinand Schuchardt. The humorous bears and other genial creations of William H. Beard's imagination caused smiles and laughter in his studio, and the painter himself received due share of notice. With his mane of gray hair and his knightly beard and moustache he looks as if he had stepped out of a canvas by Rembrandt or Velasquez.

G. B. Buller exhibited some softly painted Oriental figures. A. J. Conant had two or three portraits, one a full length picture of a lady in a dress of dull green velvet. George Boynton was the only other artist in figures whose studio was open and he showed a number of forcibly executed, yet delicately finished, portraits in crayon.

M. F. H. De Haas, whose walls are literally covered with studies of the sea in all its aspects, had half a dozen spirited marines on view, in which the roll and stir of the ocean were successfully indicated. A. Cary Smith's marine exhibit was small and conventional. Joseph Lyman appears to have desisted from pictures of the sea, for the present, and to have betaken himself to moonlights and old houses. J. C. Nicoll's pictures

were marines, one of yeasty waves rolling against a coast in a storm and others showing the ocean in more placid moods. The landscape painters made the most extensive showing.

Arthur Parton had completed a mountain-brook rippling over boulders and arched with leafage, and a large and truthful view of the Hudson in winter, looking across to the Palisades from the eastern shore. The river is dark under a leaden sky, and is half filled with ice floes. Herman Fuechsel gave an inspiring glimpse of the Alps. J. L. Fitch and H. W. Robbins made a conscientious report of the rough Adirondack forests.

Kruseman Van Elten, Wilford Linsley, and R. W. Hubbard showed some landscapes that were gently pleasing, but that were, neither in style nor subject, startling. There was earnestness and a touch of melancholy in Jervis McEntee's autumn and winter scenes, and De Forest Bolmer's landscapes had a moody aspect. Worthington Whitledge showed an unsuccessful sunset at sea and a more satisfying wood interior. Albert Insley, who has improved fifty per cent. in the last year, showed some wood and meadow subjects full of light and attractive in treatment. The artists were fatigued when six o'clock arrived, but they had been complimented to their full capacity and some were made richer and happier by sales and orders.

COMMEMORATIVE ART.

THE world owes much of the progress of decorative art to the instinctive desire of mankind to commemorate deeds and events that attracted their sympathy and excited their admiration. The ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans were wont to lavish art on the decoration of the temples of their gods. In the ruined cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, buried in ashes more than 1,800 years ago, we find on the walls of apartments frescos of an historical as well as of a domestic character.

The largest contribution to modern decoration is to be credited to the legendary and sacred art of the middle ages in which sculpture and carving were employed, not to copy any form however beautiful, but to exhibit the ideal type which the artist had conceived in his own mind, first studying the subject in every aspect, and then by aid of proper mechanical knowledge embodying his conceptions. Presently pictorial representations in stained glass rose against the sky to give expression to religious feeling, whilst painting also aided the productions of the canvas, these frequently framed in mosaic or set in richly carved and sculptured Gothic tracery.

Great works of public ornament and public commemoration subsequently enabled art to develop its full powers in aiding the moral and intellectual progress of society, when private liberality seldom had a higher object than the decoration of a room.

Throughout the Christian ages no labor and expense has been thought too great to embellish temples of worship, and in these, accordingly, every decorative art may be found illustrated. In this country public patronage has enabled our artists to depict great events in our national history and to perpetuate in sculptured monuments noble examples.

There are empty panels in the capitol at Washington waiting for "history to be made." Of late years there has been a great demand and the demand is growing for art work as private memorials, these not taking merely the form of "storied urn or animated bust," but of rich and gorgeous windows, pictorial and emblematic, set in our churches and in the walls of mansions, and of bronze figures and medallions displayed on sculptured architectural erections. The widest and best patronized field of commemorative art would appear to concern the living, as our goldsmiths, silversmiths and electro-plate manufacturers are ready to testify.

The market for commemorative productions (the more costly as usually being the result of extended subscriptions) comes not only from boat racing, races, and athletic exercises, for which prizes are offered, but is due to successive discoveries of previously unsuspected virtues in successful political aspirants on the part of their adherents.

In our social economy, whatever the position of a man, a testimonial of costly plate is certain further to exalt him. Who shall complain when art is thus so admirably served? Powers of design that might have otherwise slumbered are thus called into activity, and *chef d'œuvre*s produced, to the glory of American art, many so charming in freedom of execution and excellence of design, that we would not complain were we ourselves the recipients.